

1941 CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

By Bob Carroll

The 1941 National Football League Championship Game was held two weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Held on even terms for more than a half, the Chicago Bears won their second consecutive National Football League Championship by defeating the New York Giants 37-9 with a surge of power in the last two periods. A pair of touchdowns in the third quarter followed by another pair in the fourth made the Bears the first team to repeat as champions since the institution of the league championship game.

A skimpy crowd of 13,341 – smallest of the season at Wrigley Field – saw the contest. The gate, smaller than that netted when these same two teams met in a pre-season exhibition game, cut heavily into the participating players' pool. Each Bear received \$430.94; each Giant \$288.70. The second place teams – the Packers and Brooklyn – divided a pool of \$1,564.04. The gross receipts, including radio, were \$46,184.05.

In part, the crowd was held down by the anticlimactic nature of the game; the Giants were given little chance of derailing the Bears' championship express. Even more responsible was the depressing news coming out of the Pacific where American forces were retreating before the Japanese. Football seemed rather unimportant when viewed in context of the world situation.

Two players who appeared in the game – Young Bussey and John Lummus – would be killed in action before the war ended.

The Bears were kept in the game during the first half by the sure foot of Bob Snyder who booted three field goals, but the second half produced a deluge of Chicago points.

The final statistics showed the Bears piling up 182 yards by passing and 207 by rushing, most of it by George McAfee and Norm Standlee. The Giants garnered a mere 73 yards by passing and 80 by rushing. The Bears also led in first downs, 20 to 8.

McAfee gained 81 yards rushing and Standlee 89, each exceeding the total rushing yardage of the entire New York team. Sid Luckman's accurate forward passes paved the way for two Chicago touchdowns, including the one that broke a 9-9 deadlock and ended all effective New York resistance.

Throughout the first half and for seven minutes of the third period the Giants played a bangup offensive game and kept the Bears well away from the goal line.

The Bears led 3-0 at the start on the first of Bob Snyder's three field goals – tying the record for three-pointers in title play set by Jack Manders of the Bears in the 1933 finale. The Giants came back for a touchdown on two terrific passes by Tuffy Leemans to lead at the end of the first quarter, 6-3.

Leemans heaved his first aerial 23 yards to Ward Cuff, who made a sensational catch on the Bears' 36. Tuffy ran for four yards, and then threw four yards to George Franck. With End Jim Poole throwing a powerful block to remove the Bear safety man, Franck raced 27 more yards to go over the goal line. Johnny Siegal blocked Ward Cuff's conversion attempt to leave the score at 6-3 Giants.

The Bears, on Luckman's passes, moved to the New York 32 as the first period ended. Blocked by stout defensive play, the Chicagoans again called on Snyder who made good from the 39 to tie the score.

The Giants subsequently were forced to punt and booted the ball to their 47. Running plays by McAfee and Bill Osmanski gained to the 29, but again the Giants held, and Snyder kicked field goal No. 3. That put the Chicagoans ahead, 9-6, the score at half time. The Bears had run 53 plays to the New Yorkers' 10.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 8, No. 2 (1986)

The Giants still had a piece to say, particularly Franck who turned in a 34-yard run to open the third period and put the ball on the Bears' 46. Cuff and Leemans picked up ten yards; the Bears gave away five on an offside penalty. Leemans passed twenty yards to Cuff on the five, but the Bears got tough and held, so Cuff kicked a field goal from the 16 to deadlock the count at 9-9.

The Bears launched a touchdown drive after the kickoff. Standlee ran from his own 30 to the 40, and then to the 43. Luckman passed to Dick Plasman on the New York 34 and then to Johnny Siegal on the eight, the end making a great diving catch. Standlee charged four yards, Hugh Gallarneau one and Standlee plowed three yards for the touchdown. Snyder converted.

Soon after, Danny Fortmann intercepted one of Leemans' passes on the Chicago 32. McAfee, Standlee and Ray McLean went to the goal line in seven plays. Standlee scored and Joe Maniaci kicked the point. The Bears led 23-9 as the third period ended.

Another pass interception – this one by Center Bulldog Turner – gave the ball to the Bears on their 46 as the final period got underway. Standlee and McAfee went 15 yards and Luckman passed to the charging Standlee who ran to the Giants' 23. The Bears were called for a holding penalty, but the delay was only temporary. Luckman's long pass to McLean was ruled complete on the five-yard line on Chet Gladchuck's interference. George McAfee went into the line for yet another touchdown. Lee Artoe added the point to make the score 30-9.

The Giants kept trying right to the end, but the Bears did too.

With only seconds remaining Ken Kavanaugh completed the Chicago scoring binge by scooping up a fumbled lateral pass from Hank Soar that was intended for Andy Marefos and racing 42 yards for the touchdown. In a mood of hilarity, Ray McLean dropkicked the final extra point to make the score 37-9.

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Sunday, December 21, 1941, at Chicago, Ill. - Wrigley Field
Attendance - 13,341

<u>CHICAGO BEARS 37</u>		<u>NEW YORK 9</u>
Plasman	LE	Poole
Kolman	LT	Mellus
Fortmann	LG	Lunday
Turner	C	Hein
Bray	RG	Younce
Artoe	RT	Edwards
Siegal	RE	Howell
Luckman	QB	Falaschi
Nolting	LH	Franck
Gallarneau	RH	Cuff
Standlee	FB	Leemans
Chicago Bears	3 6 14	14 = 37
New York Giants	6 0 3	0 = 9

CH = FG Snyder 14
 NY = Franck, 31 pass from Leemans (kick failed)
 CH = FG Snyder 39
 CH = FG Snyder 37
 NY = FG Cuff 16
 CH = Standlee, 2 run (Snyder kick)
 CH = Standlee, 7 run (Maniaci kick)
 CH = McAfee, 5 run (Artoe kick)
 CH = Kavanaugh, 42 fumble return (McLean kick)

Substitutes

Bears: E - Kavanaugh, Pool, Nowaskey, Wilson; T - Stydahar, Federovich, Mihal; G - Forte, Musso, Baisi, Lahar; C - Matusza, Hughes; B - Snyder, McAfee, Osmanski, McLean, Swisher, Maniaci, Famiglietti, Clark, Bussey

Giants: E - Horne, Walls, Lummus; T - Blazine, Cope; G - Sohn, Oldershaw, Tuttle; C - Gladchuck; B - Yeager, Soar, Principe, Eakin, Eshmont, McLain, Shaffer, Marefos

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 8, No. 2 (1986)

Officials: Referee - Emil Heintz. Umpire - John Schommer.
Head Linesman - Charles Berry. Field Judge - Chuck Sweeney

GAME STATISTICS

	CHI	NY
First Downs	20	8
Yards rushing (net)	207	80
Forward passes attempted	19	15
Forward passes completed	11	3
Yards gained by forward passes	182	73
Yards lost attempted passes	12	5
forward passes intercepted by	3	0
Yards gained int. runbacks	19	0
Punting average	53.5	37.7
Total yards kicks returned (punts and kickoffs)	36	124
Opponents fumbles recovered	2	1
Yards lost by penalties	65	31

Sources: Associated Press; Roger Treat, *The Encyclopedia of Football*; David Neft, *Pro Football: The Early Years*.